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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: INGUSHETIYA: WIDESPREAD APPROVAL OF ZYAZIKOV'S
"RESIGNATION"

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor David
Kostelancik; reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: There has been widespread approval of the October 30 resignation of Murat Zyazikov as president of the northern Caucasus Republic of Ingushetiya. Representatives of one of the major opposition groups there said that they would work with the new president, former paratrooper and Deputy Chief-of-Staff of the Volga-Ural military district Yunus-bek Yevkurov. It remains to be seen if Yevkurov, like Zyazikov an outsider without a strong clan to support him, will be able to bring the worsening security situation there under control. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On October 30 Russian President Medvedev accepted the resignation of Ingushetiya president Murat Zyazikov and formally replaced him with Yunus-bek Yevkurov, a decorated soldier and an 45-year old ethnic Ingush born in the disputed Prigorodniy region of neighboring North Ossetia. Zyazikov told reporters he was leaving his post as president of Ingushetiya to take up work with the federal government in Moscow.

¶3. (SBU) The immediate reaction to Zyazikov's replacement has been positive. According to press reports, locals in Nazran, Ingushetiya's largest city, danced in the street shortly after the news was announced. Magomed Khazbiyev, the young leader of the opposition movement headed by Magomed Yevloyev until his death in late August while in police custody, pledged to cooperate with the new president. Former Ingush president Ruslan Aushev also welcomed the decision to dismiss Zyazikov and said that Yevkurov was the best choice to become the troubled republic's new president. Rosa Malsagova, editor of the banned Ingushetia.org website who fled Russia and received asylum in France this past summer, said that Medvedev had shown "some common sense" in getting rid of Zyazikov. She added that she knew Yevkurov, calling him a "man of a noble character." Commentator Ivan Sukhov expressed optimism that Yevkurov, as a "president-silovik," would be a more effective administrator than Zyazikov, who was a "chekist" who looked to federal power structures to do his job.

¶4. (SBU) Several Moscow-based North Caucasus commentators questioned whether outsider Yevkurov will be an improvement over his predecessor. Independent political analyst Dmitriy Oreshkin wondered why Medvedev had brought in another outsider for the job. Although an ethnic Ingush, Yevkurov was born in the neighboring republic of North Ossetia and, like Zyazikov, does not have particularly strong support within the family clans in Ingushetiya. Grigoriy Shvedov, Editor-in-Chief of the internet-based Caucasian Knot who was in Ingushetiya and Chechnya earlier in the week, told us that the decision to replace Zyazikov was a response to the worsening security situation in the republic over the past month, even after the introduction of additional federal troops. He also tried to tie the decision to the replacement on the same day of the mayor of Sochi as proof that former

Presidential Representative for the Southern Federal District Dmitriy Kozak is reasserting himself in the region in his new role as vice premier in charge of the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

15. (SBU) Regiona political analyst Aleksandr Kynev told us that Yevkurov was the ideal compromise candidate to replace Zyazikov. Yevkurov's background (as the man who commanded Russian forces that took control of the Pristina airport in 1999 before NATO forces could enter Kosovo as Serb forces withdrew) gives him credentials with Moscow siloviki, and his Ingush ethnicity put him in a good position to reach out to opposition forces while ensuring the stability that Moscow wants in the region. Kynev saw the appointment as a positive development.

Comment

16. (C) The decision to sack Zyazikov, who was first elected Ingushetiya's president in 2002 and then re-appointed by Putin in 2004, came almost two weeks after unknown assailants attacked a column of Russian soldiers in southern Ingushetiya. While it is unclear if the final verdict was rendered by Medvedev or Putin, to whom Zyazikov was close, it does appear that the level of violence there -- which had begun to include instances of car bombs -- had become unacceptable to Moscow. Zyazikov was seen as more Kremlin-friendly than his predecessor Ruslan Aushev; since it was not feasible to bring back Aushev, it seems that Yevkurov represented an acceptable compromise choice. Yevkurov's outsider status could help his effectiveness, as no Ingush clan will perceive him as taking another clan's side. On the other hand, his background from Prigorodniy could exacerbate already-strained relations between North Ossetians and Ingush over Ingush IDPs from the Prigorodniy region. Yevkurov's military role during the second Chechan war, while "heroic" from the standpoint of the GOR, could also detract from his popularity among the Ingush. While Yevkurov's task to wipe out the insurgency in Ingushetiya is a daunting one, he will not have the added burden of an increasingly popular opposition movement as long as he can avoid the same heavy-handed mistakes of Zyazikov.

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